

EYEWITNESS ACCOUNT OF THE SANTA CRUZ MASSACRE ON 12 NOVEMBER 1991

Details of the Witness:

Name : Aviano Antonio da Silva Faria
Age : 21 years old
Occupation : Student
Place of Birth : East Timor
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At about 6 a.m. on Tuesday 12th November 1991, we (a group of students from the Sao Jose Balidi Secondary School (Smak St. Yosep Balidi) in Dili, dressed in our school uniform (white shirt and grey trousers), were walking towards the Motael Church. We were going to attend the mass being said there for Sebastiao Rangel, who had been killed by Indonesian troops (ABRI) during the attack on 28th October 1991 on the Motael Church.

When the mass, said by Reverend Father Ricardo, was over, the thousands of young people gathered at the church proceeded to demonstrate in protest against the Indonesian soldiers' attack on the Motael Church, the death of our colleague Sebastiao Rangel, and the invasion of our territory on 7 December 1975, so that the world could see that we were still opposing that barbarous occupation.

The large crowd went in a procession from Motael Church to the Santa Cruz Cemetery in a very orderly manner. Along the way, there were no provocative incidents whatsoever on the part of the demonstrators. However, in an effort to disperse us, many of our colleagues were attacked, but we were determined to go ahead with the demonstration and reach the Cemetery. Not long after the demonstrators arrived at the Cemetery, hundreds of soldiers, police and mobile brigades appeared, all armed with modern weapons. They took up positions and surrounded the Santa Cruz Cemetery.

All of a sudden, without any warning shot to disperse the crowd, the troops (police and mobile brigades) opened fire, shooting indiscriminately in our direction.

I could not escape after the massacre because the entire cemetery had been completely surrounded by Indonesian soldiers. I saw many bodies lying on the ground. Soldiers later dragged them over to the Cemetery's main entrance, and piled them up like firewood.

I lay still on the ground, under a tree, pretending to be dead. Then soldiers came and tried to force me to stand up, but I was afraid to because, when some of my companions in the same circumstances had done so, they had been ruthlessly butchered, stabbed with knives and bayonets. Shouting and cursing at me the whole time, they still tried to get me to stand up, but I carried on pretending to be dead. They then started to kick me and stamp on me with their boots until I was bleeding from nose, mouth and ears. I received a severe blow to the head, the scar from which I still have today.

The soldiers, believing I really was dead after this brutal treatment, dragged me to the

pile of bodies. Then the trucks (Mercedes Hinu) arrived to take away the bodies that were in heaps in the middle of the road. Those still alive were placed in front of the trucks and to be run over by them.

I was taken by truck with some of the dead to the military hospital - Wira Husada. Once we got there, the second massacre started. Those who were seriously wounded were stabbed or clubbed to death, and their bodies dragged into the morgue, which was immediately closed and locked up.

After all this slaughter, in the midst of the dead bodies there were still some people (including myself) who were still alive. When I had a chance, I got up to urinate, to see if there were any other survivors, and to see if I recognised any of the dead. That was when I noticed that the journalist Kamal was among the dead.

After a few minutes, two people appeared. They were probably soldiers in civilian dress. One was holding a stone in his hand. The other carried two bottles - one containing oxygenated water, the other some pills. Whenever the man holding the stone found a survivor, he would smash the stone down on the person's head, killing them in this way. The aim of his colleague was the same, except he forced survivors to swallow the pills to poison them. As this was going on, I was lying next to a companion who was still breathing. The soldier with the stone came over to him and struck him hard on the head, killing him.

Confronted with this barbarity, and no longer able to contain my fury and hatred, I got up and faced him. In an attempt to save my own life I began to lie, saying that I had been there at the Cemetery not to demonstrate but in order to gather information for members of Security, who had sent me there because I was an informer for KODIM (Komand Distrit Militar). They told me to show them my informer's card, but I told them I had lost it with my wallet at the Cemetery.

Before leading me out of the morgue, they forced me to take several pills. However, I managed to spit out most of them, and only swallowed two. While I was being taken from the morgue and handed over to two Military Police, I managed to put my fingers into my mouth and made myself vomit the pills I had swallowed.

The two military police took me to have the wound on my head treated. In the hospital where I was seen to, I met four girls (two of whom were colleagues from my school), who had been threatened with rape.

After treatment, I was taken to a ward in the hospital, and found some of my colleagues there.

On the day of the Santa Cruz massacre, I was constantly pursued by two of the military murderers who had been at the morgue. However, they never managed to pick me out from among the wounded because, like many others, I was unrecognisable as my face was covered in bandages on account of the many cuts, bruises, bleeding, and swelling.

In hospital, we often received death threats and, in spite of being seriously ill, soldiers tortured us every day. Also, we were forced to do all kinds of things, such as, eat the rosary beads we wore around our necks. An Indonesian army Major appeared, and threatened to exterminate seven generations of us, if we persisted with demonstrations.

During the six weeks I spent in the hospital, I also noticed that the same syringe was used several times on different people.

Before being released, I was interrogated on six consecutive days by two SGI (Satuan Gugus Intel - military intelligence) agents. I was tortured, threatened, and forced to criticise the Church at each interrogation session. At one point, they pulled off the rosary beads I had been wearing around my neck, and forced me to eat them. Under duress, I was made to sign a document saying I would collaborate as an informer for Intel.

It was December 1991 before I left the hospital. I realised that I had to find a way out of Timor in order to denounce all the atrocities perpetrated by the occupying regime, especially the Indonesian black list containing the names of countless people (whose whereabouts are still unknown today), and others who were rearrested at the time of the visits by United Nations Special Rapporteurs.

In view of all these terrible events, this group of students from the Sao Jose Balidi Secondary School, together with our people as a whole, will never be able to accept Indonesian presence on our soil which, under International Law, is still legally administered by the Portuguese Government. Our repudiation of the Indonesian regime stems mainly from Indonesia's continual disrespect for human rights and the fundamental right of our people to Independence.

In the eyes of Indonesia, any activity connected with promoting our Independence is provocative, insane, communist inspired, etc., which is entirely untrue.

Furthermore, strange as it may seem, they think we are crazy, and accuse us of carrying knives and firearms with which to fight Indonesian soldiers. This is obviously a downright lie, invented to mislead international opinion and lend credibility to the despicable Indonesian regime, headed by one of the most savage murderers of our time.

The 12th November 1991 massacre constitutes further evidence of Indonesia's total disregard for human rights, and has made the Maubere people more determined than ever to continue its fight for independence.

November, 1994